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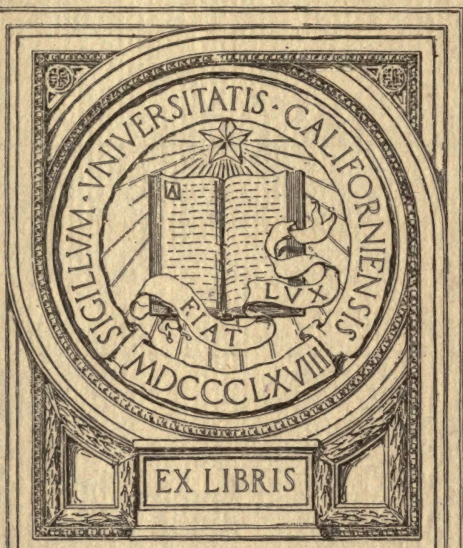

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Light Through the Valley

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Towards a Better World by Luis Ricardo Falero

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Light Through the Valley

By

James Henry MacLafferty

"Yea, though I walk through
the Valley of the Shadow of Death,
I will fear no evil."

Paul Elder and Company
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San Francisco

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Light Through the Valley

IT is not fitting I should seek thee, Death;
And yet 'tis seemly I should welcome thee
When thou shalt call, and greet thee as a friend.
And kindlier is my thought of thee, because
For years I feared, misjudged, misunderstood
Thy meaning, nor did comprehend the boon
So oft conferred by thee.

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Thus, being held
Before my sight a terror, sund-
'ring wide,
Dissolving tend'rest ties, I heard
thee called
"Grim Reaper," a "Destroying
Angel"; so,
I feared to look upon the face of one
On whom thy hand was laid. I
shunned to walk
E'en near the brink, to dart a fur-
tive glance
Into the self-created gloom we call
The Valley of thy Shadow.

Now I know
Thee as thou truly art. Methinks
I see

Light Through the Valley

Thee through the eyes of those who
long have prayed
That thou wouldst come to end a
hopeless day
Of pain, unending till relieved by
thee.
And I have watched beside the bed
of one
Whose years were many, and whose
light had burned
So deep within its socket that the
flame
Itself appeared the shadow of a
flame.
Each new-born day I saw him
grieve because
Thy wings had not been folded o'er
his couch

For one sweet moment, then thy
flight renewed,
His weary spirit borne by thee afar
To other worlds, and hoped for,
better things.

And I have seen thee fold in thy
embrace
A form so fair, my words could
ill describe
Her beauty, yet, where dwelt a soul
who longed
To be away with thee; who saw
the sea
Of years ahead, then saw the dream
of life
A shattered wreck along its break-
ing shore,

And shrank to breast the storm. And when thou cam'st
To her, I saw the answering smile o'erspread
Her face, and heard her answer unafraid.
Yea, Death! To hosts unnumbered hast thou been
A Messenger of Light, an Angel Fair
Of Mercy. Thou hast freed the hopeless slave,
And ended weary exile by thy touch.
The martyr at the stake hath prayed for thee,
And happy in his torture, raised his song
Because of thine approach.

So, Angel Death,
Though life is sweet, and while I
seek thee not,
I pray that I may yet abide thy call
In perfect peace; in calm tran-
quillity
Of soul; while not rejoicing, yet
as bold
To go as to remain. As glad to solve
The riddle as to blindly thread its
maze;
And with abiding faith that I may
trust,
As now, so then, the One whose
messenger
Thou art, to lead me through the
open gates
Of immortality.

Here ends the poem Light Through the Valley by James Henry MacLafferty. The frontispiece after a painting by Falero. Published by Paul Elder & Company and printed for them by The Tomoye Press under the direction of J. H. Nash, in the City of San Francisco, in the Month of May, Nineteen Hundred & Ten

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